



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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60th Montana Legislature

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For immediate release

Aug. 14, 2008

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Committee to Act on EMS, Hospital-Related Legislation

A legislative committee will decide next week whether to forward to the 2009 Legislature several proposed bills related to emergency medical services and the delivery of health care.

The proposals are the result of two studies near completion by the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee: a study of emergency medical services (EMS) approved by the 2007 Legislature with passage of Senate Joint Resolution 5 and a study of the health care delivery system approved through SJR 15.

The committee will meet Thursday, Aug. 21, at 9 a.m. in Room 102 of the Capitol. The meeting will continue through Friday.

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft bills before the committee decides how to proceed. Any bills approved by the committee will be submitted to the 2009 Legislature for consideration.

The EMS bills would provide tax incentives for volunteer emergency medical technicians and their employers and would create a grant program to help EMS providers buy vehicles and equipment.

One of the SJR 15 bills involves "economic credentialing," the practice of a hospital denying or limiting privileges to a doctor who may have a financial interest in a competing health care facility. The draft also includes requirements for health care providers to disclose investment or employment interests to patients when they make referrals. And it includes provisions that would regulate conflicts of interest among health care providers.

Other bills contain proposals either to extend a statutory moratorium on specialty hospitals or revise the definition of and licensing requirements for specialty hospitals.

Other items on the committee's agenda include:

- An update from a consulting firm hired to conduct a study of Montana's publicly funded mental health system. Representatives of DMA Health Strategies will discuss their preliminary findings and recommendations. The study is due to be finished in October.

- A review of legislative proposals from the state Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to decide whether to authorize drafting and pre-introduction of the bills.
- Reports from DPHHS representatives on a new state suicide prevention plan, a study undertaken with the Department of Justice on the issue of requiring criminal background checks of direct-care workers, and the results of a study by the state Cervical Cancer Task Force of a new vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

Committee members are Sens. Carol Juneau, D-Browning; Rick Laible, R-Darby; Terry Murphy, R-Cardwell; and Dan Weinberg, D-Whitefish; and Reps. Edith Clark, R-Sweetgrass; Ernie Dutton, R-Billings; and Teresa Henry and Diane Sands, both D-Missoula.

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